

Group dances their way into becoming a club

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Scott Philipp enjoys playing rhythm-based games, especially with his friends.

After seeing a growing interest in the games, he decided to form a club to bring the gaming community together and now he's inviting others to come and join the fun.

Wednesday night UI's newest club, the Bemani Club, had their first-ever meeting at the Student Union Building.

The term Bemani originally comes from the video game brand Konami's music games, specifically "Beatmania."

The club was formed to encourage and organize events where people who are interested in music based video games, such as "Dance Dance Revolution," "In the Groove," "Guitar Hero" and other similar games can gather and play together as a community.

"While playing by yourself can be fun, it really sucks. I can get together with other people and I'll be playing all night long," club president Philipp said.

Philipp, who is attending UI to earn his Master's in architecture, decided that it would be a good idea to make a club for fellow Bemani fans.

"I started playing "DDR" in 2002 and only recently did I feel there were enough people to make it an official group," Philipp said. "Doing this makes it easier to advertise for tournaments and publicize events, that way if others want to join in they can. Some may feel intimidated by playing these games in public and maybe if they're playing in private with an open group of people they'll be more likely to join."

Philipp explained there was no other group on campus like this one and after spending some time with them that was more than apparent.

They are a lively group, with most members who have known each other prior to the meeting.

While they were friends and competitors in the games, they all were having a good time.

"If people are interested in playing with us, we're a pretty friendly group and I personally love helping newbies who don't know much about the games," Philipp said.

He is hoping to offer tutorials and training sessions for the inexperienced newcomers, that way they'll be more inclined to get involved.

Philipp also said that playing these rhythm-based games is beneficial for your health and that his has improved since he started playing back in 2002.

Crystal Van Horn, a fellow club member, said that when she first started playing she didn't have great rhythm, but once she got into it she saw that improve.

"Eventually I got the hang of it," Van Horn said. "It can be quite the work out."

One of Van Horn's favorite aspects of the games is the music.

"It's so much fun," she said. "I like the music, it's really cute. There's a really great variety of songs."

While no upcoming events have been scheduled, they are planning on having Bemani nights where they can all get together for a couple of hours and play.

"It would be in a room, either on-campus or off-campus and we'd be running multiple games on different systems at the same time. It would be sort of like a cultural fair for these kinds of games," Philipp said.

Mike Roberto, another club member, said that he had a friend who could come to an event like this just for Guitar Hero.

Philipp encourages everyone who's currently a member and those who are thinking about becoming one to invite their friends to tag along and give it a try.

"Everyone should play at least once, that way they can find out what it really is like," Philipp said.

He also explained that once people get into it, the competition really makes it a lot more fun.

"The competition is what drives some people to play," Philipp said. "They may be playing on the same levels, but they are constantly striving to beat each other's scores, which makes it really interesting."

For those interested in joining the Bemani Club, or just trying it out, Philipp said to look out for flyers and advertisements around campus for their next scheduled event, or to just come and play with them down in the Wallace Complex basement, where they play often.

"We're down there a lot, so definitely come swing by if you're interested," Philipp said. "We want this club to be what everyone wants and we don't want to neglect any games."

For more information about the Bemani Club, check out the club Web site at <http://www.techno-hut.com/bemani/>, where there is contact information for the members and news about upcoming events.